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ECUMENISM

GROWING CONSENSUS:
THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
AND THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES

Prof. Dr. Dietmar Winkler

ECO-THEOLOGICAL MODEL OF
EPHREM THE SYRIAN

Dr. Anthimos Matthews Metropolitan

BOOK REVIEW

NEWS

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Editorial

“When we walk together, the Lord helps us to experience that communion which comes before all conflicts”. During his visit to the Waldensian Church of Turin in Italy on 22, June 2015, Pope Francis concluded with these words his message at the ecumenical gathering. He said following the footsteps of his predecessors and echoing the ecumenical spirit of the Catholic Church: “On behalf of the Catholic church I ask your forgiveness. I ask your forgiveness for unchristian-like and even inhuman attitudes and conduct which, historically we have had against you. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us”. It reminds us of the spirit of the second Vatican council, “The words of St. John hold good about sins against unity: “If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us”. (1Jn.1:10) So we humbly beg pardon of God and of our separated brethren, just as we forgive them that trespass against us” (UR. 7). Living in the memories of the Golden Jubilee of the closing of this Sacred council we can say one of the principal fruits which the ecumenical movement has already allowed to be harvested in these years is the rediscovery of the fraternity which unites all those who believe in Jesus Christ and have been baptized in his name.

Today the ecumenical movement has become a fundamental element of the life in the Church. With the turn of twentieth century it has been deep-rooted in the conscience of

the churches that we are in a journey towards the unity. We have gone a long way in this path towards unity. So we present two main articles from two eminent personalities in the field of ecumenism and Patristic studies. Describing the developments and evolutions in the field of ecumenical world and the contribution made by the Catholic Church since Vatican II to the cause of Ecumenism, Prof. Dr. Dietmar Winkler makes a study on the theme “Growing Consensus: The dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches”. Prof. Winkler makes a review of the growing relationship between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Prof. Dr. Dietmar W. Winkler is Dean of the School of Catholic Theology at the University of Salzburg, Austria. He is also Professor of Patristic Studies and History of Christianity and director of the Center for the Study of the Christian East. Since 2008, he has been Consultant of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Vatican). Prof. Winkler, who serves on the Salzburg Institute Advisory Board, is a member of the board of Pro Oriente (Vienna) and responsible theologian for the dialogue with the Oriental Churches and the academic director of “Pro Oriente Studies in the Syriac Tradition.” Prof Winkler has written, edited and co-edited 13 books and numerous journal articles and book chapters. Among his latest book publications are *From the Oxus River to the Chinese Shores*.

Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia. Berlin: LIT 2013 (orientalia – patristica – oecumenica, Vol 5); *Syriac Churches Encountering Islam. Past Experiences and Future Perspectives*. (Pro Oriente Studies in Syriac Tradition 1). Piscataway: Gorgias 2010.

The second article is presented in the context of the encyclical of Pope Francis ‘*Laudato Si*’. This article is a contribution from Dr. Anthimos Matthews a young theologian and Metropolitan of the Syrian Orthodox Church, who did his research on the eco theological vision of Mar Ephrem the Syrian. Mar Ephrem the common possession of the undivided Syriac Christianity has great relevance in the ecumenical scenario of the Syriac Christianity. Mar Anthimos studied theology in the United Theological College Bangalore and was ordained priest on September 26, 2006 by Aboon Mor Baselios Thomas I Catholicose. He did Doctorate at Paris Lodron University, Slazburg Austria on the theme “Integrity of Creation in the Theology of Ephrem the Syrian: A Patristic Eco-theology”. He was consecrated as Metropolitan on January 15, 2012 by late lamented Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka II at Damascus, Syria. At present Mar Anthimos is the Metropolitain of Angamaly Diocese - Muvattupuzha Region and a residing Faculty in the MSOT Seminary, Mulanthuruthy in the Department of Patristics.

This issue of Christian Orient presents also a review of the revised edition of the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Christian East (EDCE)*, an indispensable reference work on all aspects of the Eastern Christianity. It is an

outstanding reference work providing a wide-ranging account of the key historical, liturgical, and doctrinal features of Oriental Churches. Thanks to Dr. Roby Alencherry for introducing such a valuable work to the readers of Christian Orient.

A Flashback: *From October 25th to 27th, 1971, His Holiness Mar Ignatius Jacob III, Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, paid an official visit to Rome. During this time he was the guest of the Holy Father Pope Paul VI. The Pope and the Patriarch met for a long private meeting on October 25th. At the end of this meeting they participated together in a Celebration of Prayer in the Matilda Chapel.*

We conclude with a few words from the address of His Holiness Blessed Pope Paul VI during the celebration of this historical meeting:

“The history of the relations between our Churches shows many lights and shadows..... We recognize that difficulties which have been created over centuries are not always easily overcome. The task is more urgent because of the demands which are being made upon the Churches today. In a world which is struggling to give birth to new ideas, to new developments which can enable all men to share in the gifts of God’s creation, to new relationships between men and nations which will ensure peace with justice, we are called to proclaim the “one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God who is Father of all, over all, through all and within all” (*Ephesians* 4:5-6).

Dr. Cherian (Joby) Karukaparambil
Section Editor

Growing Consensus: The dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches

Prof. Dr. Dietmar Winkler

In January 2004 in Cairo, for the first time in history, the whole family of Oriental Orthodox Churches began to meet *par cum pari* with the Roman Catholic Church on an official level for theological dialogue; before that the Catholic Church was only in official dialogue with Oriental Orthodox Churches on a bilateral basis.¹ However, these Churches have been meeting unofficially since 1971 on the initiative of the Foundation *Pro Oriente* (Vienna, Austria), where a considerable amount of theological work has been done and a lot of ecumenical material have been made available.

In the present paper, it is not possible to reflect on all these endeavors in an extensive way, but we might give an overview and focus on some theological aspects, since these themes have been discussed *con variazioni* in all the other dialogues, too. We shall first introduce the *Pro Oriente* dialogue and focus on its Christological deliberations and

disputed ecclesiological topics. Second, we will have a glimpse to the official Oriental Orthodox/Catholic bilateral dialogues and declarations before 2004, and finally give insight to the present official dialogue.

I. The unofficial dialogue sponsored by *Pro Oriente*

Two weeks before the third session of the Second Vatican Council (1962- 1965) came to an end with the passage of the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*), the then Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Franz König (1905-2004), on the advice of some Austrian intellectuals, decided to found *Pro Oriente*. The Foundation - an institution of the Catholic Arch-diocese of Vienna and not an official tool of the Roman Catholic Church or the Vatican - intends to contribute to ecumenical dialogues on an unofficial level. This approach prepared the ground for the official dialogue with the Byzantine Orthodox Church², and

¹There is one exception: The national official dialogue in the United States that has met regularly since 1978. Cf. National Conference of Catholic Bishops/Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches (eds.), *Oriental Orthodox-Roman Catholic Interchurch Marriages and other Pastoral Relationships* (Washington, 1995).

contributed substantially to official agreements with the Oriental Orthodox Churches. The idea has been that *Pro Oriente's* work, because it is "unofficial", makes it possible for Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox theologians to confer frankly with their Roman Catholic colleagues in order that important historical and theological research on the common heritage of the Churches of East and West as well as personal encounter could occur on this level to support official relations.

As we explore the results of *Pro Oriente's* Consultations and Study Seminars between Roman Catholic and Oriental Orthodox theologians we have to be aware of the fact, that the joint communiques are always preliminary results and only become "official" when they are received by an official dialogue committee, signed in a joint declaration between Popes and Patriarchs/Catholicoi, and agreed upon by the respective Holy Synods. However, it is a fact, too, that the results of the *Pro Oriente* dialogues are achieved because theologians and representatives of the various churches, faithful to their traditions and heritages, have

come to the conviction that the discussed topics are points of consensus or at least emerging consensus. As the Communique of the third Vienna Consultation (1976) states: "As an unofficial consultation, we are not in a position to act as official representatives of our Churches or to take decisions in their names. We offer here to our Churches the results of our experience."³ Moreover, as well known, some of the results have been incorporated in documents officially accepted by the Churches. The unofficial status did not reduce the sense of responsibility towards the Churches; on the contrary, the sense of responsibility was strong. Indeed, some of the theologians were also bishops and some would later occupy important positions in their Churches.

The inspiration for the unofficial Oriental Orthodox/Roman Catholic dialogue comes from the series of unofficial conversations between the Oriental Orthodox and Orthodox Churches.⁴ In 1971 *Pro Oriente* started a series of five unofficial ecumenical *Consultations* between Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic theologians in Vienna, continuing 1973, 1976, 1978, and 1988. These

²Cf. The path-breaking first ecclesiological consultation between orthodox and roman catholic theologians KOINONIA, which was organized by Pro Oriente in 1974 in collaboration with the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Chambesy and the Pontifical Secretariat (now Council) for Promoting Christian Unity. Published as: Pro Oriente (Hg.), *Auf dem Weg zur Einheit des Glaubens*, Innsbruck-Wien 1976.

³Communique 3rd Consultation, in: *Wort und Wahrheit Suppl. Issue 5* (1988) 156. In the following I use the abbreviation WuWS with the respective number of the volume.

⁴Cf. P. Gregorios-W.H. Lazareth-N.A. Nissiotis (eds.), *Does Chalcedon Divide or Unite? Towards Convergence in Orthodox Christology* (Geneva, 1981). The main impulse for the Vienna Consultations came from Vardapet (now Archbishop) Mesrob K. Krikorian, who was involved in the unofficial Orthodox/Oriental Orthodox conversations and has participated in all the Vienna Consultations.

consultations were followed by so-called *Study Seminars* (On Primacy 1991, On Councils and Conciliarity 1992, On Ecclesiology 1994, Authority and Jurisdiction 1996). They organized further *Regional Symposia* in Wadi Natrun, Egypt (1991); Kerala, India (1993); Kaslik, Lebanon (1994); and Kröffelbach, Germany (1997). The aim of these Symposia was to inform a wider public - bishops, priests, theologians, laypeople - about the results achieved in the Vienna dialogues.⁵

1. Christology

Already the first Consultation (1971) arrived at a Christological Consensus. It is valuable to study not only the very paragraph of the Christological Agreement, which has become famous as the so called *Vienna Christo-logical Formula*, but also its context.

a. The basis

The theologians had to look for a consensus clearly founded upon the common ancient tradition, the experience of communion in life and faith of the first generations. This common basis was found

in the same Apostolic tradition, particularly as affirmed in the Nicean-Constantinopolitanian Creed; we confess the dogmatic decisions and teachings of Nicea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431); we all agree in re-jecting both the Nestorian and Eutychian positions about Jesus Christ.⁶

This basis is confirmed again at the end of the Communique of the first Consultation: "We commonly submit ourselves to the witness of the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament and thus to the Apostolic Kerygma [- -]"⁷ The second and fifth Consultation further confirmed this common basis, i.e. the Apostolic tradition, the Nicean-Constantinopolitanian Creed, and the first three Ecumenical Councils.⁸

b. The consensus

Solidly founded on this common traditional basis, the Joint Communique now comes to an Christological Consensus, the core of the *Vienna Christo-logical Formula*:

⁵Published as Vienna Consultations between Theologians of the Oriental Ortho-dox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. Papers and Minutes: WuWS 1-5 (1971.1973.1976.1978.1988). And Pro Oriente (Hg.), *The Vienna Dialogue*. Vienna, 1993 (Booklet 4: On Primacy. First Study Seminar 1991); Vienna 1993 (Booklet 5: Councils and Conciliarity. Second Study Seminar 1992); Vienna 1995 (Book-let 7: On Ecclesiology. Third Study Seminar 1994). The PRO ORIENTE dialogues as well as the official ones (esp. Oriental Orthodox/Roman Catholic, Oriental Orthodox/Eastern Orthodox) are analyzed in detail in my *Koptische Kirche und Reichskirche: Altes Schisma und neuer Dialog*. (Innsbrucker theologische Studien 48) Innsbruck, 1997.

⁶Communique 1st Consultation, in: WuWS 5, 152.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Cf. Ibid. 153, 149.

1. We believe that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ is God the Son Incarnate; perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity.
2. His divinity was not separated from his humanity for a single moment, not for the twinkling of an eye.
3. His humanity is one with his divinity without com mixtion, without confusion, without division, without separation.⁹

Occasionally it has been said that this formula used a new language to express the common faith in Christ, avoiding the disputed technical terms *hypostasis*, *physis* and *prosopon*. In fact, it uses an "old" language, embedded in the tradition.¹⁰

The first sentence refers to the *Formula of Union* (433) as quoted in the letter of Cyril of Alexandria to John of Antioch, the so called *Laetentur*- letter.¹¹ The phrase is also present in the Dogmatic Formula of the

Council of Chalcedon (451): "[- -] our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same Son, the Same perfect in Godhead, the Same perfect in manhood."¹²

The next sentence shows that significant elements of this formula are from the Confession of Faith of the *Coptic Liturgy of St Basil*, a profession found in the so-called post-Anaphora declared loudly by the priest just before communion. It is important to remark that this liturgical confession has been prayed through the centuries by the Coptic Orthodox Church and now it is part of an ecumenical consensus. Furthermore, the remarkable expression that His divinity parted not from his humanity "for a single moment nor for a twinkling of an eye" can be found in the *Life of Dioscorus*, which was written by Theopistos (6th century). The text is preserved in Syriac.¹³ This is a tragic irony of history: The tradition ascribes this expression to Dioscorus, the Alexandrian Patriarch, who was deposed at the Council of Chalcedon.

⁹ Ibid. 152. verses: D.W. Winkler.

¹⁰ Cf. D.W. Winkler, "Ein Passus aus der koptischen Basileiosliturgie und der syrischen Vita Dioscori als Quellen der Wiener Christologischen Formel", in: S. Emmel, M. Krause u.a. (eds.), *Ägypten und Nubien in spätantiker und christlicher Zeit*. Vol 1 (Sprachen und Kulturen des Christlichen Orients 6,1) Wiesbaden, 1999, 534-545.

¹¹ Cf. Cyril Alex., *Ep. 39 ad Joannem Antiochenum Episcopum, missa per Paulum Episcopum Emesae* (PG 77,173C-181C); Johannes Ant., *Ep. 38 Joannes Antiocheniad Cyrillum* (PC 77,169D-173B). Cyril quotes the symbolum antiochenum of the Letter of John of Antioch but makes a slight modification: He strengthens the unity of the subject by adding "in" twice to the Antiochian expression 'perfect God' and 'perfect man'. Cf. A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* I. 7th ed. Atlanta, 1975.500.

¹² Engl. Trans R.V. Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon*. London, 1953,210.

¹³ Theopistos, "Histoire de Dioscore, Patriarche d'Alexandrie", ed. M. F. Nau, in: *Journal Asiatique* 10 (1903) 21-108 (Syr.), 241-310 (French); for the expression "not for a twinkling of an eye" cf. 65.36 (syr.), 279.254 (French).

He is now honored to be part of an ecumenical consensus.

As ecumenical research has proved, we have to refer to Dioscorus also concerning the last sentence of the above quoted text. The famous adverbs are an important part of the *Chalcedonian Definition* of the unity of Christ and they are also found in *Cyril's letters*.¹⁴ At Chalcedon it was Dioscorus of Alexandria, who for the first time made a statement implying these adverbs.¹⁵ Last but not least we will find three of the adverbs also in the Confession of faith of the *Coptic Liturgy of St. Basil*. Thus, the four adverbs are part of the common tradition. This Christological agreement was re-affirmed and supplemented on certain points by the second Vienna Consultation (1973). The crucial paragraph is:

We all agree that our Lord, Jesus Christ, who is consubstantial with the Father in his Divinity Himself became consubstantial with us in His Humanity. He perfectly unites in Himself perfect Godhead with perfect Manhood without division, without separation, without

change / without commixture. The flesh possessing rational soul did not exist before the union.¹⁶

The most important elements are the "rational soul", which eliminates every suspicion of Apollinarism, and the double "consubstantiality", which is part of the *Chalcedonian definition*, but was already present in the *Formula of Union* (433).

This brief analysis of the sources of the Vienna Christological Consensus reveals how much the Churches preserved in common, despite the theological stereotypes and accusations prevalent in the post-Chalcedonian struggles. It also shows how much the Christological Consensus, as well as the Council of Chalcedon, is shaped by Cyrillian theological language.

c. The terminology

In attempting to describe the relationship of divinity to humanity in the incarnate Christ, human language is too weak. The various doctrinal definitions with verbally conflicting formulae caused trouble, even though their underlying intentions were clearly the same. In fact, the second Vienna Consultation (1973) remarks:

¹⁴ Cf. Cyril *Letter to Acacius of Melitene*, in: L.R. Wickham, *Selected Letters*. Oxford, 1983, 49; *Letter to Succensus*, in: *ibid.* 76f. Cf. M.K. Krikorian, "The Christological Consensus", in: Pro Oriente (ed.), *the Vienna Dialogue: Middle East Regional Symposium Deir Amba Bishoy* (Booklet 3). Vienna, 1993; 92.

¹⁵ Cf. ACOII 1, 1 p. 112, nr 263: "We do not speak of confusion, neither of division nor of change. Let him who says confusion, change or mixture be anathema." At the first Consultation it is V.C. Samuel, "The Council of Chalcedon: An Analysis of a Conflict", in: *WuWS* 1 (1971) 53 who makes this important comment.

¹⁶ *Communique* 2nd Consultation, in: *WuWS* 5, 153.

The problem of terminology remains with us. For those of us in the Western tradition, to hear of the one nature of Christ can be misleading, because it may be misunderstood as a denial of his humanity. For those of us in the Oriental Orthodox Churches to hear of two natures can be misleading because it can be misunderstood as affirming two persons in Christ.

[- -] Our common effort to clarify the meaning of the Greek terms *hypostasis* and *physis* in the Trinitarian and Christological context made us realize how difficult it was to find a satisfactory definition of these terms that could do justice to both contexts in a consistent manner¹⁷

The text tries to open the way to a right understanding of apparently contradictory points of view. It became clear that differing terminologies could express substantially the same faith. Faced with a variety of views on matters of doctrine that were seen unsatisfactory the Church fathers of the 4th and 5th centuries developed their own preferred formulations on different theological topics using the analytical tools of Greek philosophy. Because the theologians involved came from different backgrounds, some technical terms were not understood in the same way and this - not surprisingly -

led to misunderstanding and confusion. However, if the different formulations are understood in the way each theologian intended the terms to be understood, then it becomes clear that, despite the verbal conflict, the various formulations are seeking to express the same truth concerning the mystery of the Incarnation. It is of utmost importance to find out what each theologian intended to say with the terms he used, rather than asking what his opponents imagined they read in these expressions. The different approaches are complimentary, and underlying the verbally conflicting formulas, there is usually a common understanding. The second Vienna Consultation (1973) is very clear about that:

We recognize the limits of every philosophical and theological attempt to grasp the mystery in concept or express it in words. If the formulas coined by the fathers and doctors of the Churches have enabled us to obtain an authentic glimpse of the divine truth, we recognize that every formula that we can devise needs further interpretation. We saw that what appears to be the right formulation can be wrongly understood, and also how even behind an apparently wrong formulation there can be a right understanding. We understand that when our common father in Christ, St. Cyril of Alexandria speaks of the one Incarnate nature

¹⁷ Ibid. 153f.

of God's Word, he does not deny but rather express the full and perfect humanity of Christ. We believe also, that the definition of the Council of Chalcedon, rightly understood today, affirms the unity of person and the indissoluble union of Godhead and Manhood in Christ despite the phrase 'in two natures'.¹⁸

This quote asserts that our human attempts to express in words the mystery of the Christ event are never able to grasp the truth in its fullness. The text shows mutual understanding and acceptance concerning the different terminologies. Every human expression always is preliminary and needs further interpretation. In all the Consultations of the Vienna dialogue participants are fully aware of the fact that the person and salvific work of the Lord Jesus Christ is a mystery. It can never completely be expressed in words nor even fully understood by the human mind. Already the first Vienna Consultation states briefly: "We in our common faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ, regard his mystery inexhaustible and ineffable and for the human mind never fully comprehensible or expressible".¹⁹ And the second Consultation (1973) states, "no created mind can fully comprehend the mystery of how Godhead

and Manhood became united in the one Lord Jesus Christ".²⁰

d. The Methodology

The Vienna Consultations could only accept various Christological terminologies that contain the same substance of faith by defining limits. It had to be clear within which framework different terminologies are possible. Therefore the first Consultation (1971) rejected "Nestorian and Eutychian positions about Christ". The fifth Consultation (1988) is even more detailed and emphasized

that the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God could not be exhaustively formulated in words, and that within the limits of condemned errors like Arianism, Nestorianism and Eutychianism, a certain plurality of expressions was permissible in relations to the inseparable and unconfused hypostatic union of the human and the divine in the one Lord Jesus Christ.²¹

As the apostolic tradition and the first three councils are the common basis, so "Nestorian and Eutychian positions" are rightly seen as the heretical extremes of the Christological spectrum as far as these terms are correctly understood.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Communiqué 1st Consultation, in: WuWS 5,152.

²⁰ Communiqué 2nd Consultation, in: WuWS 5,153.

²¹ Communiqué 5th Consultation, in: WuWS 5,149.

Drawing the line between acceptable differences in expression and unacceptable teaching on central theological issues is never easy. Since the Council of Chalcedon and especially in the controversial literature of the 5th and 6th centuries, supporters and adversaries of the Council accused each other mutually of "Nestorianism" and "Eutychianism". The two expressions became stereotypes and every side was sure they knew what content the two words have. In the twentieth century a lot of research has been done on the questions of whether the heresy of "Nestorianism" was the faith of the historic Nestorius, and whether the heresy called "Eutychianism" was the faith of the seemingly uneducated monk Eutyches. Here it is not the place to discuss this research, but we have to be aware of this problem.²²

We must discuss the term "Nestorianism" very carefully in the light of scholarly developments since the beginning of the 20th century. In the present official dialogue it is essential for both sides to be aware of the Christological Consensus and to keep distance from the mutual accusations of the 5th and 6th centuries. One factor in these severe accusations was the different understandings of the key technical terms beneath their stereotyped usage. In the course of the ecumenical dialogues we realized that

terms could have various meanings and contents. Rejecting the mentioned theological positions "Nestorianism" and "Eutychianism" just by using their names is therefore not sufficient. In this context we have to refer to the Oriental Orthodox/Reformed dialogue, because this Christological Agreement has the most precise description of the limits of Christological expressions of all ecumenical agreements of the last decades. The document, signed in the Netherlands (1994) by H.G. Metropolitan Amba Bishoy and by Rev. Milan Opocensky, contains the remarkable paragraph:

Both sides agree in rejecting the teaching which separates or divides the human nature, both soul and body in Christ, from His divine nature or reduces the union of the natures to the level of conjoining. Both sides agree in rejecting the teaching which confuses the human nature in Christ with the divine nature so that the former is absorbed in the latter and thus ceases to exist.²³

Rather than using the terms "Nestorianism" and "Eutychianism" which are subjects of scholarly theological dispute, this Christological Agreement profoundly describes exactly what the two parties believe.

²² Cf. esp. L. Abramowski, "The History of Research into Nestorius", in: Pro Oriente (ed.), *Syriac Dialogue* 1. Vienna 1994, 54-65.

²³ Agreed Statement on Christology. Reformed-Oriental Orthodox Dialogue, in: J. Gross-H. Meyer-W.G. Rusch (eds.), *Growth in Agreement II. Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1999*. Geneva-Grand Rapids, MI, 1992, 292f.

This certainly was also the conviction of the Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic theologians in the Vienna Consultations. The focus was on substance not mere epithets. It has to be clear on the one hand that Christ is not an ordinary man whom God adopted, that there are neither two Sons nor two Subjects. It has to be clear on the other hand that divinity and humanity are not mixed into a third nature, and that divinity is not a principle of union that absorbed humanity.

2. Ecclesiology

Although the final Communique of the second Vienna Consultation focuses on Christology, the major part of the papers and discussions were about ecclesiology. Among other topics, Ecumenical Councils and the difference in number were studied, but the Consultation concluded that “no consensus is easily attainable in this issue”.²⁴ Participants decided to study the topic more deeply in the third Consultation, starting with a general view on ecclesiology.

a. Universal and Local Church

After a recapitulation of the two previous Consultations the third *PRO ORIENTE* Consultation (1976) started to study each other's concepts of the Church. Excellent papers were presented to discuss the notions of local Church, universal Church, and Church Catholic. The final Communique conveys the result of this discussion as follows:

We confessed that it is the same mystery of the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church, the body of our Risen and Ascended Lord, that is being manifest both in the, 'local' Church and in the, 'universal' Church. One and the same Church, for there cannot be more than one, is manifested both locally and universally as *koinonia* of truth and love, characterized by Eucharistic communion and the corporate unity of the episcopate. The unity of the Church has its source and prototype in the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, into which we have been baptized.²⁵

This paragraph touches several issues. First, there is agreement that the universal Church exists in and from local churches. There is only one Church; its unity is expressed through participation in the Eucharist and collegiality of the episcopate, while the model for this unity is the Triune God. Theologically we can summarize this text in terms of the concepts of Communion Ecclesiology, Eucharistic Ecclesiology, and Trinitarian Ecclesiology. These subjects were taken up again in a Study Seminar “On Ecclesiology and the Unity of the Church” (1994). In that Seminars' Agreed Report one can read:

²⁴ Communique 2nd Consultation, in: *WuWS* 5.154.

²⁵ Communique 3rd Consultation, in: *WuWS* 5.155.

On each place where the Eucharist is celebrated in the one faith and around the bishop in apostolic succession the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church is present in its fullness. This local church is in communion with all other churches that celebrate the same Eucharist in the same Apostolic Faith. The links of communion are the bishops. The worldwide church (Church universal) is a communion of local Churches, bound together at every level by ways of a conciliar fellowship. It is within this conciliarity that presence and function of Primacy should be seen, at the local, regional and universal levels.²⁶

Although there is this common understanding and although the Third Study Seminar (1994) states that the Catholic Church and Oriental Orthodox Churches have so much in common "regarding the Apostolic Faith and sacramental life that they can call each other Sister Churches", further ecclesiological problems became evident, especially the interrelation between primacy and conciliarity. The integral connection of ecclesiology, catholicity, conciliarity, primacy,

and church unity is a very sensitive point in the debate. They have to be seen in a holistic way, which has made the systematic discussion since 1978 difficult. The third, fourth, and fifth Consultations as well as all the Study Seminars tried to cut the Gordian knot. There has been no final solution, only a lot of useful results.

b. Ecumenical Councils and Conciliarity

This issue was the major question of the Third Vienna Consultation (1976) and of the Second Study Seminar (1992). As a result of the schism and the fact that the Oriental Orthodox Churches recognize only three Councils as ecumenical, there are a multitude of questions related to this topic.

There is agreement in the Third Vienna Consultation (1976) that "conciliarity, i.e. the understanding of the Church as a *koinonia* [is] so essential to the nature of the Church as the Body of Christ"²⁷. Therefore the participating theologians made the important methodological step of distinguishing "between the council or synod as an event, and the synod as an aspect of the continuing structure of the Church's life."²⁸ Furthermore, the communique indicates:

As for the council as an event, we could not agree on how and by

²⁶ Agreed Report on the third Pro Oriente Study Seminar 'Ecclesiology and the Unity of the Church' (Vienna, 1-5 July 1994), in: *The Vienna Dialogue. On Ecclesiology Third Study Seminar July 1994 (Booklet 7)*, Vienna, 1995, 174f.

²⁷ Communique 3rd Consultation, in: *WuWS* 5,155.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

whom such a world wide council of churches should be convoked and conducted, nor could we agree completely on the procedure for the reception of past or future councils.²⁹

This paragraph alludes to unresolved questions about the relationship between local and universal Church, the relationship between Councils and Primacy, the reception of Councils, and the criteria of their ecumenicity. Despite this divergence both sides affirm “the right of the churches to convoke a council whenever found necessary” and that there is “the need of structures of coordination between the autocephalous churches for the settlement of disputes and for facing together the problems and tasks confronting our churches in the modern world”³⁰

The second Study Seminar (1992) showed that “Conciliarity” itself is no longer a controversial issue. It is a main point of consensus that the “Church is by its very nature conciliar” and that “Conciliarity means more than Councils. Conciliarity is communion (koinonia)”³¹ with a vertical transcendent dimension as well as a horizontal dimension of all faithful in time and space.

Both sides agree that Ecumenical Councils are an important expression of conciliarity. In particular, the first three Councils of Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), and Ephesus (431) are the basis of the Christological Consensus, a fact that has been underlined since the first Consultation (1971), and which implicitly seems to suggest the idea of a “Hierarchy of Councils”³². For future discussions on this topic we will have to speak about councils of the different degree and their embedding in the respective traditions.³³

Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic participants were in agreement that there is neither a prescribed time rhythm for holding ecumenical councils nor any prescribed procedure. Furthermore, there is agreement that the ecumenicity of a Council is not expressed through the number of participants, or a specific procedure, but through reception.

The Study Seminar (1992) mentions several points to be further clarified. All of these have to do, in one way or another, with the role of the Church of Rome and her bishop.

The disagreement is on the insistence on communion with one

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid. 155f.

³¹ Statement of the Second Study Seminar of Pro Oriente on Councils and Conciliarity between theologians of the Roman Catholic Church and Oriental Orthodox Churches. In: *The Vienna Dialogue. On Councils and Conciliarity Second Study Seminar June 1993* (Booklet 5). Vienna 1993, 58.

³² The term is used by the late Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan in the first Pro Oriente Consultation. Cf. *WuWS* 1 (1971) 71.

³³ Cf. the contribution of Hans-Joachim Schulz in the Second Study Seminar: “The Great Councils - the different degree of their realization in the respective traditions”, in; *ibid.* 44-51.

particular See or bishop as absolutely essential and uniquely indispensable for the unity of the Church. [- -] The disagreement is on a unique, distinct and exclusive Petrine office, divinely instituted within the Apostolic College. [- -] The disagreement is about the indispensability in a unique manner, of the consent of one particular bishop of a particular See.³⁴

However, there is agreement that after communion has been restored between the Churches a new procedure has to be developed for convoking, conducting, and confirming a council, "faithful both to the tradition of the Church and to the needs and possibilities of the time".³⁵

c. Primacy, Jurisdiction and Authority in the Church

Already the Second Vienna Consultation (1973) started to discuss the topic of primacy but did not find a consensus to bridge the ministry of St. Peter, as the Roman Catholic Church understands it, and the Ecumenical Councils. The principle of collegiality emphasized by the Second Vatican Council has been appreciated as "a move in the right direction"³⁶.

The fourth Vienna Consultation (1978) had as its primary topic the nature and scope

of primacy in the exercise of ecclesiastical authority. Further, an entire Study Seminar (1991) focused on Primacy, and the fourth Study Seminar (1996) worked on Authority and Jurisdiction. It is evident that in the context of this paper only certain tendencies can be elaborated. There is a significant amount of fruitful theological work in the papers.

The Catholic theologians at the fourth Consultation (1978) showed the willingness to reinterpret the First Vatican Council without infringing on the essence of the dogma. According to the discussion notes, these efforts were appreciated by Oriental Orthodox participants. The Catholics analyzed the historical, sociological, and political background of this council of the 19th century and pointed out that the qualities given to Roman primacy were conditioned by this background and also had pragmatic motives. Behind the definition were fears of the Church being threatened by the mood of the time and the response was an exaggeration of the ideas of sovereignty. The conciliar decision is a response to a challenge posed by a particular historical situation. This is also reflected in the final Communique's insight that "infallibility [- -] pertains to the Church as a whole, as the Body of Christ and abode of the Holy Spirit"³⁷

Another problem noted is the various functions today effectively exercised by the

³⁴ Ibid. 60.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Communique 2nd Consultation, in: *WuWS* 5,154.

³⁷ Cf. Communique 4th Consultation, in: *WuWS* 5,158.

bishop of Rome: the service of the Bishop of Rome, metropolitan for the bishoprics centered on Rome, Primate of Italy, the function of Western Patriarch, and at least until 1870 the function of a sovereign of the Church State. Catholic theologians made it clear that the duty as Bishop of Rome is the first and fundamental activity of the Pope.

Some of the papers of the Oriental Orthodox participants did not accept a universal primacy of jurisdiction. However, all are convinced that authority and primacy as well as conciliarity and the believing community properly belong to the nature of the Church. Further the Communique points out that the goal is a full union of sister churches with a basically conciliar structure. There was no agreement regarding one particular Church as the center of the unity, but the "need of a special ministry for unity was recognized by all."³⁸ In this context also the Oriental Catholic Churches are mentioned. While the right of the Eastern Catholic Churches to exist is affirmed, any proselytism is clearly rejected "according to the principles of Vatican II and subsequent statements of the See of Rome."³⁹

The first *Study Seminar* (1991) focused on Primacy, too. The intention was to compare the various concrete forms of primacy in the respective churches. For this purpose organigramms of the individual

participating churches were presented. The problem was that ecclesiological, theological, and juridical elements came together at once. Altogether it has been observed that all the present structures are the result of historical processes and reflect responses to various demands facing particular churches in particular contexts.⁴⁰

Significant differences were observed in the relation between Head and Synod of Bishops and in the way the churches understand the meaning of primacy. This touches in particular the different understanding of the Roman Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches concerning the place and the functions of the Bishop of Rome in the one Church of Christ. The main problem is the contrasting approaches to the subject: the Roman Catholic Church developed a theology of primacy, while the Oriental Orthodox Churches regard primacy as a historical and jurisdictional institution. This becomes clear in two separate reflections drafted by the participants of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and a Roman Catholic participant in addition to the Final Statement of the Study Seminar.

In the Oriental Orthodox statement a 'Petrine office' is very much questioned, and probably the core of these three pages is the following paragraph:

³⁸ Ibid. 158.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Statement of the First Study Seminar of Pro Oriente on Primacy, in: *The Vienna Dialogue. On Primacy June 1991* (Booklet 4). Vienna, 1993, 77.

The Oriental Orthodox believes that no See could exercise authority over all the churches in the world. Nor do they believe that communion with the See of Rome is any more indispensable than communion with any other See for the visible manifestation of the unity of the Church.⁴¹

The Roman Catholic reflection starts with the necessity of a systematic approach, and stresses points of consensus: Primacy is practiced in all our Churches on different levels and in different ways; it is necessary to distinguish these levels; primacy has to be studied in organic relation with the principle of conciliarity; and it is vital to distinguish between the principle of the need for a primacy and the concrete way it is practiced, as the practice has taken very different forms in different Churches. The current praxis has to be seen in the context of its historical development. Therefore the western primacy as exercised in the 19th and 20th centuries is not the only possibility.⁴² From a Roman Catholic point of view, however, it is important that

Primacy cannot be reduced to its purely juridical dimension. It is fundamentally a service to preserve, manifest and promote

unity in faith, witness, service and liturgy. The concept of primacy of jurisdiction, which seems to constitute a major difficulty for the Oriental Orthodox Churches, should be studied within the full meaning and the manifold dimensions of primacy as a service of communion.⁴³

Primacy has to be seen in a holistic sense, in its place within an ecclesiology of communion on various levels and in constant interaction with conciliarity.

If one reads carefully all the papers of the Vienna Consultations and Study Seminars concerning ecumenical Councils and primacy, more points of emerging consensus could be excavated than are reflected in the Joint Communiqués and Agreed statements. The key is to respect and learn to understand the different developments of our traditions in very different historical contexts after the division.

The upcoming question obviously is how to develop a model of church union - faithful to the tradition of the Church - that reconciles the ecclesiological tension between universal responsibility and local autonomy, between collegiality and primacy. There are different approaches to this challenge in the respective Church traditions.

⁴¹ Questions for Future Study on Primacy and the Unity from the Oriental Orthodox Perspective, in: *ibid.* 82.

⁴² Cf. Reflections of a Roman Catholic participant after the discussions during the Seminar, in: *ibid.* 80f.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 81.

II. Official Declarations between the Catholic Church and particular Oriental Orthodox Churches

We were analyzing *Pro Oriente's* efforts because tremendous work has been done and immense progress has been achieved on that level and had inspired later official endeavors. The importance of the *Vienna Christological Formula*, produced on an unofficial level, is evident it served as a basis for subsequent dialogue and Common Declarations between these Churches on an official level.

In an overview reference should be made to Common declarations approved or signed by the Bishop of Rome on the one side and the Head of a particular Oriental Orthodox Church on the other.⁴⁴ Rather than chronological, we would like to focus on three main topics which can be found in these Joint declarations: Christology, Sacramental Life and Ecclesiology.

1. Christology

One of the first Christological Statements was signed by Pope Paul VI and the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Mar Ignatius Yocoub III in 1971 approving that there

[- -] is no difference in the faith they profess concerning the

mystery of the Word of God made flesh and became really man, even if over the centuries difficulties have arisen out of the different theological expressions by which this faith was expressed.⁴⁵

This pioneering statement was a first direct result of the unofficial *Pro Oriente* Consultation. A more comprehensive Christological agreement was signed in 1973 by Paul VI and Coptic Pope Shenouda III.⁴⁶ This one is directly quoting the so called *Vienna Christological Formula* and has not to be repeated here. Anba Shenouda was active participating and drafting this Formula in this first *PRO ORIENTE* Consultation, just a few months before he became Patriarch.

About ten years later an equally extensive agreement on Christology was signed by Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka II and Pope John Paul II in 1984.⁴⁷ Also this one follows quite literally the *Vienna Christological Formula* and thus the Declaration between Paul VI and Shenouda III.

In 1990, Pope John Paul II and Catholicos Mar Basilios Marthoma Mathews II from the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church approved a Christological Agreement, which might be the most mature

⁴⁴ In the following I will refer to the Information Service published by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Vatican City). Some of these documents are also found on the website of the Council (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/sub-index_ancient-oriental-ch.htm); Cf. also the three Volumes *Gnxxvth in Agreement* published in 1984, 2000 and 2007.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Information Service* 16 (1972) 3-5.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Information Service* 22 (1973) 9-10.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Information Service* 55 (1984) 99-63.

between an Oriental Orthodox and the Catholic Church. Therefore a part of it should be quoted here:

We affirm our common faith in Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior, the Eternal Logos of God, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit from the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. We believe that Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, is true God and true man. The Word of God has taken a human body with a rational soul, uniting humanity with divinity.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is one, perfect in his humanity and perfect in his divinity at once consubstantial with the Father in his divinity, and consubstantial with us in his humanity. His humanity is one with his divinity without change, without commingling, without division and without separation. In the Person of the Eternal Logos Incarnate are united and active in a real and perfect way the divine and human natures, with all their properties, faculties and operations.⁴⁸

This is a concise and transparent text based on a balanced combination of the descending Alexandrian perspective and the Chalcedonian terminology. Furthermore in 1993, when Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarch Abune Paulos visited Rome, Pope John Paul II touched the Christological question in his Greeting Address⁴⁹. He affirmed the one faith in Christ although "our traditions used different formulations to express the same ineffable mystery".

Although the earliest common declarations between a bishop of Rome and a Head of an Oriental Orthodox Church had been signed with the Armenian Church in 1967 and 1970⁵⁰, a first explicit Christological agreement is to be found only in December 1996. Pope John Paul II and Catholicos Karekin I of Etchmiadzin signed a short and concise Christological statement which is reminiscent to previous statements going back to the Vien-na Christological Formula.⁵¹ Only about one month later, in January 1997, Pope John Paul II signed an analogical declaration with Catholicos Aram I of Cilicia, referring to the communion in faith declared with Catholicos Karekin I without going into details or quoting the previous text.

From a catholic point of view, the recognition of the orthodoxy of Christological faith of the Oriental Orthodox Churches

⁴⁸ Cf. *Information Service* 73 (1990) 39.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Information Service* 84 (1993) 150-152.

⁵⁰ Cf. Common Declaration between Pope Paul VI and Catholicos Khoren I, in: *Information Service* 3 (1967) 4-6; Common Declaration between Paul VI and Catholicos Vasken I, in: *Information Service* 11 (1970) 10.

⁵¹ Cf. *Information Service* 94 (1997) 30f.

can be considered as accomplished although an official Christological Consensus between all the Oriental Orthodox Churches as a family and the Roman Catholic Church is still missing. If such a Christological agreement should be formulated in future it would be possible, on the firm basis of the already achieved common faith, to deepen our understanding of both theological understanding and theological terminology.

2. Sacramental life

Several of the above mentioned Common Declarations also deal with sacramental theology and practice. There can be found some highly significant though concise statements regarding the sacraments of the Church. The Common Declaration signed by Pope John Paul II and Catholicos Karekin II of Etchmiadzin in 2000 might serve as an example here⁵², because it is one of the latest official text signed by the heads of Churches on a bilateral basis:

We acknowledge furthermore that both the Catholic Church and the Armenian Church have true sacraments, above all - by apostolic succession of bishops - the priesthood and the Eucharist. We continue to pray for full and visible communion between us. The

liturgical celebration we preside over together, the sign of peace we exchange and the blessing we give together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ testify that we are brothers in the episcopacy.

However, the most extensive and substantial agreement on sacramental life and practice is to be found in the Common Declaration signed in 1984 by Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Zakka II.⁵³ This text is probably the most elaborated agreement the Catholic Church has with an Orthodox Church. On the basis of the doctrinal agreement on Christology both Church leaders acknowledge that the "identity in Faith" is "not yet complete" and that for this reason "the Holy Eucharist cannot yet be concelebrated by us", but nevertheless they feel themselves entitled to envisage collaboration between both Churches in pastoral care, particularly in the field of sacramental life, which finds its centre in the Eucharist. Because of the "precarious conditions of these difficult times" the Church heads diagnose situations of pastoral necessity and permit the following:

It is not rare, in fact for our faithful to find access to a priest of their own Church materially or morally

⁵² Cf. *Information Service* 108 (2001) 133-141.

⁵³ Cf. *Information Service* 55 (1984) 59.63. Cf. also: J. Oeldemann (ed.), *Gemeinsamer Glaube und pastorale Zusammenarbeit. 25 Jahre Weggemeinschaft zwischen der Syrisch-Orthodoxen Kirche und der Römisch-Katholischen Kirche*. Freiburg 2001, esp. the article of A. Shemunkasho, "Die Gemeinsame Erklärung vom 23. Juni 1984. Pastorale Erfahrungen, Kritik und Perspektiven", 52-83.

impossible. Anxious to meet their needs and with their spiritual benefit in mind, we authorize them in such cases to ask for the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Anointing of the Sick from lawful priests of either of our two sister Churches, when they need them. It would be a logical corollary of collaboration in pastoral care to cooperate in priestly formation and theological education. Bishops are encouraged to promote sharing of facilities for theological education where they judge it to be advisable. While doing this we do not forget that we must still do all in our power to achieve the full visible communion between the Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and ceaselessly implore our Lord to grant us unity which alone will enable us to give to the world a fully unanimous Gospel witness.

This is an excellent Christian witness with a deep pastoral concern demonstrating a notable degree of consensus between the Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church. It has to be said, that the Catholic Church formally recognizes the validity of all sacraments celebrated by the Oriental Orthodox Churches and it would be an

enormous step forward to have similar pastoral agreements with all Oriental Orthodox Churches like the one with the Syrian Orthodox. This would, however, presuppose, that all Oriental Orthodox Churches also recognize the validity of the sacraments celebrated in the Catholic Church.

3. Ecclesiology

The third doctrinal field of growing consensus has to do with Ecclesiology. The official agreements touch various ecclesiological issues and so does especially the official bilateral dialogue between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church from 1974 to 1992.⁵⁴ Topics have been the hierarchical communion of the Church, ecclesiology of communion, elements of communion, unity and diversity, refusal of proselytism, etc. which cannot be touched in detail here. These were topics also discussed in the *PRO ORIENTE* meetings mentioned above. And all these previous endeavors and results on the unofficial and official bilateral level flew into the official dialogue which finally started in 2004.

III. The official Oriental Orthodox/Roman Catholic Dialogue

On January 27-29, 2003, a Preparatory Committee for the establishment of a Dialogue Commission involving representatives of the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches came together in Rome

⁵⁴ Cf. D. W. Winkler, *Koptische Kirche und Reichskirche* 300-330.

and developed a work plan for a future theological dialogue. The dialogue then started in 2004 in Cairo. Since then the *“International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches”* has been meeting every January either in Rome or in a country of the Oriental Orthodox Churches.⁵⁵ This Commission consists of 14 Catholic and 14 Oriental Orthodox representatives comprising the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church (Catholicosate of all Armenians, Holy Etchmiadzin), the Armenian Apostolic Church (Catholicosate of Cilicia, Antelias), the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church, the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahido Church.

The first phase of this dialogue (2003 to 2009) focused on Ecclesiology and resulted in the common text *“Nature, Constitution and Mission of the Church”*⁵⁶. The methodology of the dialogue is as simple as effective: scholarly (theological, patristic, historical, liturgical) papers are presented on specific issues from each side and provide the basis for further discussion. By that the document presents a synthesis of basic insights and conclusions. Particularly the following topics

were part of the theological exchange and dispute: *“Church as Communion”* in Rome (2005), *“Authority in the Church”* in Etchmiadzin (2006) and *“Mission of the Church”* in Rome (2007).⁵⁷

After an Introduction, the document starts with a reflection on the *“Mystery of the Church”* with subchapters on *“The Holy Trinity and the Church of Communion”*, *“The Attributes of the Church”*, *“Growing Towards Full Communion”*, *“Points For Further Study And Discussion”*. An amount of consensus could be found on the sacramental Nature of the Church, even after fifteen hundred years of separation. Although this chapter is highly theological, it does not forget the pastoral implications and ends with:

27. Where full communion is still unattainable for historical or canonical reasons, advanced convergence in matters of faith should allow further theological and pastoral agreements to be made between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, particularly in answering to the urgent needs of their communities, where they live

⁵⁵ So far ten plenary meetings have taken place: 1. Cairo (Egypt), January 27-30, 2004; 2. Rome, January 26-29, 2005; 3. Etchmadzin (Armenia), January 27-30, 2006; 4. Rome, January 28 - February 3, 2007; 5. Maarrat Sednaya (Syria), January 27 - February 2, 2008; 6. Rome, January 27-30, 2009; 7. Antelias (Lebanon), January 26. - February 1, 2010; 8. Rom, January 25.-28, 2011; 9. Addis Abeba (Ethiopia), January 17-21, 2012; 10. Rom, January 23. - 26, 2013.

⁵⁶ Cf. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_ch-docs/rc_pc_chmtuni_doc_20090129_mission-church_en.html.

⁵⁷ Cf. the Final Reports of the meetings: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrtuni/sub-index/index_ancient-oriental-ch.html.

together. In this effort, our Churches will have to address the questions of mutual recognition of baptism and mixed Christian marriages.

The second chapter focuses on ecclesial hierarchy and "Bishops in apostolic succession" while the third part develops the field of "Synodality/ Collegiality and Primacies" (the latter in Plural) with subchapters on "Local/Diocesan Churches and their Bishops", "Relationship between Synodality/Conciliarity and Primacies", and the "Ecclesiological meaning of Synods/Councils". Points for further Study and Discussion are added with the not surprising statement:

While our Churches are in basic agreement concerning the functioning of primacy and synodality/conciliarity at the local and regional levels, they differ on the way these concepts can be applied at the universal level.

However, one has to add, that the fraternal atmosphere of the discussion on this topic is not comparable with the one in the official Orthodox/Catholic dialogue. The Joint Commission for theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches is working in an extremely constructive way, in a fraternal character and a true desire to step forward towards unity. There is a cordial atmosphere of openness and love, with mutual respect and faithfulness. That the Joint Commission could pass such a substantial paper in a comparatively short time is also due to this

togetherness and to the substantial preliminary work on the unofficial level. The participating representatives have already gone a long way together in the ecumenical movement and mutual trust has grown throughout the years.

A second phase commenced with the meeting which took place in the Armenian Apostolic Catholicosate in Antelias/Lebanon in 2010, which focused on the reception of Councils and the way in which each Church expressed their communion in the first five centuries. It has to be taken into consideration that only with Emperor Constantine the structure of the imperial church has started to develop patriarchates of different ranks. The present ecumenical discussion on Autocephaly and Primacy - especially in the Orthodox Churches - usually focuses on this model, which has been called the "Pentarchy". But this is a model, which only applies for the Church within the Roman Empire and *prima vista* does not include Churches like those in Armenia, Persia, Ethiopia, and India. In that sense the pre-Constantinian era seems to be interesting and the dialogue started to study the ways how communion and communication among the Churches existed until the mid-fifth century. The report of the plenary session of the eighth meeting in Rome 2011 states:

In these various studies, the members of the commission focused more precisely on the concrete expressions of communion and communication among the churches before the separation. Indeed, communion was expressed primarily through

various forms of communication. It was noted that in the pre-Constantinian period, there was an intense communication among the churches, especially in times of crisis. There was a common sense of responsibility towards the other churches that was found most clearly in the exchange of letters and synodal decisions. These provided a means of conveying encouragement and challenge to one another, as well as theological clarifications. This exchange was mutual among the various churches. It exemplified a remarkable degree of communion among local communities in a process that lacked central direction after 250 years of expansion throughout the Roman Empire and beyond, including Armenia, Persia, Ethiopia and India.

In the meetings of Rome (2011), Addis Abeba (2012) and Rome (2013) studies focused specifically on the exercise of communion among the Churches in the Early Church and its implications for our search for communion today. Theological and historical studies of the New Testament evidence, the exchange of letters and visits, Synods/Councils and their reception, prayer and liturgy as means of communion and communication, Martyrdom as an element of communion and communication, Monasticism, and the veneration of Saints have been

presented so far. The comprehensiveness of the topics might demonstrate that the dialogue would like to understand Church Unity in a more holistic way than in simple canonical terms and the dispute about a "protos" or a "primus inter pares", which has to be regarded as a narrowing of ecumenical perspective. The Joint Commission is on the way to draft a second document, but there is no pressure to issue it, since it needs time to understand Church Unity in a more integral way.

The results of these studies might give new insights, as well for other theological dialogues. But also the fraternal atmosphere as one important fact might serve as a model for ecumenical conversations. It may be good to remember that the divisions of the Church tragically weakened Christianity especially in the Middle East, where it was born. In the course of the last decades, little by little a new awareness developed, leading gradually to the discovery that the various traditions were in fact trying to express the same faith with different and sometimes apparently contradictory concepts and expressions. This theological and ecumenical process realized that "Councils and Fathers previously anathematized or condemned are orthodox in their teachings", as the official Orthodox/Oriental Orthodox dialogue expressed it.⁵⁸ Despite possible upcoming difficulties, the present situation of our Churches demands that we devote renewed energy to our common journey towards unity in the form of mutual understanding, solidarity, and common witness.



⁵⁸ Communiqué Geneva 1993. Joint Commission of the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, November 1-6, 1993.

Eco-theological Model of Ephrem the Syrian

Dr. Anthimos Matthews Metropolitan

Theologies are developed within the faith traditions as well as in the living contexts. One of the primary concerns of theology is, therefore, to theologize on living conditions and to build broken relationships in desperate conditions. In this context, theology transforms to *Theology is what theology does*. If theology does for the betterment of the whole creation and interrelates all created beings, then it becomes Eco-theology, a liberation theology, for its main thrust is to liberate the creation from the clutches of human exploitation and marginalization. Therefore, for me, theology is about relationships, the *logos* which highlights relationship between God and the creation. In fact, to bind the broken relationship between the Creator and creation, and between creations is the main aim of doing Eco-theology. In this context of Eco-theology, option for the natural world relates to option for the poor, for both are directly proportional and also under *vicious circle of poverty* (deficiency), i.e. the natural world is getting disfigured and the poor are getting dehumanized.

Eco-theology has come into forefront in the midst of hue and cry over the uncontrolled and unlimited human exploitation over the rest of creation. Many scholars critically evaluated and still evaluate

the lack of consciousness in the present theological discourses to address this devastating crisis. In this context, the research focuses on the fourth century Syriac Church Father, Ephrem the Syrian and the concept Integrity of Creation in his literatures in order to develop feasible solutions to encounter the ongoing crisis.

Ephrem lived in the fourth century Mesopotamia (Nisibis and Edessa) where wars and destructions were a common scene due to its strategic position on the *Silk Road*. Even though Nisibis and Edessa were earning considerable income due to business, the fate of common people was largely on the edge of devastating poverty. On another side, Christian life was affected by the grave disputes over the Christian doctrines and orthodoxy. Ephrem's theology developed in these contexts, where the pain/pathos of the common people was at its zenith.

Ephrem formulated his Creation Theology solely relying upon the Genesis Creation account of Moses. Even though, he is immensely guided by this account, one finds finest reflections and dimensions when he deals with God and creation. So, regardless of *brought forth* (vegetative world), *fashioned* (animal world) and *fashioned* (human world) in Ephrem's analysis, *His* (Divine) *Will* ultimately resulted in the creation of vegetative

world, animal world and human world, i.e. the whole creation. Therefore, for him, God demonstrated His rich wisdom when He beautifully carved creation. Creation is also a manifestation of God's revelation and therefore it cannot be de-linked from God's self-revelation. God has gifted Adam/(humanity) with the *Image of God*, a splendid gift which makes Adam/(humanity) so special, however, this exclusive gift over the rest of creation is very critically analyzed by Ephrem by a very promising concept, i.e. sacramental view of creation.

Ephrem's sacramental view of creation is rooted in his evergreen concept, i.e. the *Nature* (natural world) and the *Scripture* are two witnesses that reveal God, the two witnesses which reach everywhere and at every time. So, nature and the Scripture are the pre-experience of the divine revelation before incarnation. For him, nature is the third harp which Christ placed before Himself as a witness to the other two harps (Old Testament and New Testament), for it is harmonious and completes the other two. To be precise, the image of the Creator is hidden in these three harps and in these three harps, appears Christ. Therefore, understanding the harmony of nature and the Scripture is a criterion for understanding Ephrem's Creation Theology.

God's love has graciously provided symbols and types both in the Scripture and natural world, and also the names and metaphors in the Scripture. By means of these types and symbols, the invisible God reveals Himself to humanity. So, the harmony between the Creator and all orders of

creation is portrayed in and through *types and symbols*. The presence of the *hidden power of the Creator* gives types and symbols a deeper meaning and significance. One can see this hidden power through the *eye of faith*. Christ is the Supreme Interpreter who fulfills symbols through His interpretation, because He is the Lord of the Symbols. However, one should not forget the fact that types and symbols disclose the *hiddenness of the Creator* to human being according to one's capacity. Therefore, the hidden power of the Creator embedded in the natural world through types and symbols in turn gives the natural world a sacred character. Ephrem does not draw a line of demarcation between humanity and the natural World, instead he professed that *nature is pure*.

In the context of sacramental character of the natural world, Ephrem presents a group of symbols found in the natural world to *Faith, the Cross and the Trinity*, and wheat, olive and grapes (fruits of the natural world) with *Bread, Wine and Oil* (the three medicines of the spiritual world) by which Christ heals humanity, olive as a symbol of God, serves and resembles Christ, oil as a hidden treasure-house of symbols of Christ, dear friend of the Holy Spirit. So, for him, types and symbols in the natural world and *human being's engagement, involvement and participation* with them will help to discover a sacred character of the natural world.

In this way, Ephrem has constructed countless word-pictures to express the mysterious meanings of creation and also to show *nothing exists in isolation, rather inter-connected*. Moreover, the Creator made this

arrangement of interdependence with a purpose to give everything to the whole creation. Ephrem's concept, Integrity of Creation is revolving around the main axis, creation depends on a *Single Table*. From this single table, the natural world, God provides *everything for each creature*, that too in equal measure, *for sustenance*. This further implies that God's creations are intended to live in mutual dependence with each other, hence the *Integrity of Creation*.

Adam and Eve were blessed *on this earth, not in Paradise*. God has prepared this dwelling place, the earth, before they sinned, because God was aware of their transgression of divine commandment. Moreover, they became multiplied after they began to fill the earth and from earth their destiny started. In the earth-humanity indispensable relation, therefore, he acknowledges that earth is our *nursing mother* and we are her children. He substantiates by saying that earth cried out to the Lord for her children who were drown in the flood (of sin) and therefore Christ came down and instituted baptism and thereby they were drawn out to heaven. The *event of naming* shows the inter-relatedness of Adam/(humanity) with the animal world. Christ came down to humanity (mortal) in order to make them renew with fire and spirit, like angels (immortal) and this further implies that there is also an interconnection between the Heavenly World and Created World.

The transgression/exploitation of the divine commandments by Adam/ (humanity) disfigures the whole creation. According to Ephrem, the whole creation was entirely blurred because of Adam and as a result the

earth was diseased, became dark, mother of thorns and a prison. Sin, resulted from the transgression of the divine commandments, is the major cause for the disfigured creation, whether it is disobeying the divine law in the case of Adam and Eve or other sins such as murder in the case of Cain. Hence, the gravity of sin makes the earth helpless, because God uses the earth to make the sinful humanity's life miserable and a channel for repentance. Therefore, God's curse upon the rest of the creation to intensify the curse on humanity is a divine plan.

Sin is the result of the misapplication or misuse of the free will. The misapplication of their (Adam and Eve) free will guided them to the tree to consume forbidden fruit and thereby falling into sin (visible disease), and thereby disturbed the divine purpose of the creation (invisible disease). The other drives that lead to sin are lust/desire, greed and held back truth. So, the ultimate end of misuse of free will and resulting sin is the distortion of Image of God and the harmonious relation between the Creator and the whole creation.

Ephrem asserts that before Adam-Eve had sinned, all the created works were pure. Hence, the sin of Adam/(humanity) paved the way for a *disfigured creation*. Therefore, the rest of the creation became victim of sin. However, the visible signs of disfigured creation such as thorns and thistles peeped out from the earth, animals proved harmful etc. were to make them repent and return to their original state. Moreover, restoration from the low esteem or disfigured state is a preferential option for the whole creation. Christ is the physician sent to heal the diseased

creation, i.e. He was sent to heal the ills of a land that is under a curse. Therefore, He came down to free, to sanctify, to restore and to renew the whole creation.

The eco-theological perspectives are interwoven in Ephrem's literatures. He brings forth an insightful Eco-theology with the concept *God is sacramentally embodied in the creation* (Panentheism) and also *God with creation* (Pansyntheism). His exegesis on the *Genesis Creation Account* portrays in details the eco-theological principles such as Eco-justice, Intrinsic value/worth and Integrity of creation. There are radical insights such as ecological readings of kenosis and sin embedded in his literatures. Along with that, the interpretation over authority/dominion and misuse of free will also appear with a considerable importance, especially in today's context of more aggressive dominion over the rest of creation. Two vibrant concerns for today's praxis – *Spiritual Sensitivity* (to understand natural world as a witness to the Creator) and *Moral Responsibility* (an essential criterion for the mastership/authority) are of utmost significance. Thus, Ephrem presents an eco-theological model which is undoubtedly *Theo-centric*.

The Holy Scripture highlights the wholeness of creation and entrusts human

beings to take care of the Eden garden (Gen 2:15). Therefore, God of the Bible is a God of justice who protects, loves and cares for the most vulnerable among his creatures. Today's developmental model is threatening the lives and livelihoods of many, especially among the world's poorest people, marginalized and destroying biodiversity. The ecumenical vision is to overcome this model based on over-consumption, greed and amassing of wealth. When creation is threatened by the irresponsible and destructive activities of human beings, Churches and Christians are called to speak out and act as an expression of their commitment to life.

The Church has a very prominent role to play in this context, because the Church "... is a community renewed by and in Christ, and is destined to become the ferment of, and instrument for, the renewal of the whole of humanity and creation"¹ and moreover, according to Origen, "the Cosmos of the Cosmos".² The Church should also uphold the values of Kingdom of God, because *Ecclesia*, the called-out community, is called out to labour for the *Kingdom of God* and its justice values, rather than *Kingdom of power* and its exploitative values. Therefore, *Eco-theology should become an inseparable part of the vision, mission and ecumenism of the Church*.

¹ ARAM, Unity and Mission 62.

² Quotation taken from: ARAM, For a Church 89.

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BOOK REVIEW

Dr. Joseph (Roby) Alencherry

Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Christian East, Edward G. Farrugia SJ (ed.),
Second Edition (revised and expanded), Pontifical Oriental Institute,
Rome 2015, pp. XXXV+1965+Atlas.

The Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome has come out of a recent publication confirming once again its relentless mission at the service of the Christian East. Uniquely authoritative and wide-ranging in its scope, the revised edition of the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Christian East (EDCE)* is an indispensable reference work on all aspects of the Eastern Christianity. This edition updates and expands on previous Italian and English-language editions (2000), and is more than twice as large as the first. It is an outstanding reference work providing a wide-ranging account of the key historical, liturgical, and doctrinal features of Oriental Churches.

This *Encyclopedic Dictionary* is a joint venture of more than hundred scholars of Eastern tradition, living in many different countries and working together over a number of years. It contains circa 2,000 pages, and offers unrivalled coverage of all aspects of this vast and often complex subject: From History to Theology, Tradition as well as Discipline, Patristic Scholarship and The Bible, The Church Liturgy and its celebration. The publication of the second edition, after a decade of hard work, is a remarkable achievement and an invaluable source, for which the editor and his assistants deserve abundant praise.

The editor admits that this work is presented not as a finished product, but rather as a “growing body of knowledge, responding to needs but discovering new lacunae every time one tries to fill them” (Preface). This work is structured alphabetically combining essay-length articles and brief, informative notations and bibliographies on hundreds of topics central to the history and theology of Eastern Orthodoxy. Unfortunately the book has no index.

The *Encyclopedic Dictionary* provides valuable information on the St Thomas Christians and Christianity in India. Articles pertaining to the East Syriac tradition and the Indian Church are prepared by eminent scholars like Bishop Awa Royel, Sebastian Brock, Cesare Giraudo, Hubert Kaufhold, Manel Nin, Pierre Yousif, Sunny Kokkaravayalil, (late) Jacob Kollaparampil, Xavier Koodapuzha, Varghese Kurisuthara OCD, Kurian Mathothu, George Nedungatt, Paul Pallath, Jacob Thekkeparampil, Bishop Sebastian Vadakkal, Joseph Vazhuthanapally, and Jacob Vellian.

Here is an index of those articles dealing on Indian Christianity, with their respective authors. Archdeacon of all India (*Kollaparampil*); Alfonsa Muttathupadathu (*Mathothu*); Assyrian Church in India (*Koodapuzha*); Cariattil Joseph (*Koodapuzha*); Kuriakose Elias Chavara (*Mathothu*); Christian Orient (*Koodapuzha*); Church of the East, Liturgical Year (*Vellian*); Coonan Cross Oath (*Kollaparampil, Pallath*); St Thomas Cross (*Vazhuthanapally*); Synod of Diamper (*Pallath*); Eastern Christianity in India (*Pallath*); Kerala (*Mathothu*); Malayalam (*Mathothu*), Mar Ivanios (*Koodapuzha*); Mission League (*Mathothu*); Palliyogam (*Pallath*); Paurastya Vidyapitham (*Koodapuzha*); Placid Podipara (*Koodapuzha*); Qurbana (*Pallath*); St Thomas Missionary Society (*Vadakkal*); SEERI (*Thekkeparampil*); Southists (*Kollaparampil*); Syro-Malabar Church (*Koodapuzha, Vellian*); Syro-Malabar Liturgy (*Pallath*); Syro-Malankara Church (*Pallath*); Varthamanapustakam (*Koodapuzha*).

There is an interesting witness on the presence of Christians in Malabar/India in the fourth century and their liturgical usages, by an Arian bishop and missionary, named Theophilus the Indian (ca.320 - d. after 364). According to G. Fiaccadori, author of this article, bishop Theophilus "is said to have travelled to 'the 'other India', i.e., to Malabar, where Arian communities seem to have been settled prior to his visit. On account of his authority as an imperial legate and presumably as a bishop, Theophilus limited himself to confirming them in the faith they had already adopted and to amending 'liturgical' vices and deformations they had acquired, such as listening seated to the Gospel being read - which is, however, a sign of respect in the Hindu tradition" (p. 1828).

We are happy to note that the *Encyclopedic Dictionary* gives a short history of our quarterly Journal. "*Christian Orient* is a theological quarterly which began to be published in 1980 by the Oriental Study Forum. This Forum with the encouragement

of Archbishop J. Powathil was organised by Rev. Prof. Xavier Koodapuzha and started functioning in 1978" (p. 415).

In the appendix, one can find *Atlas Hierarchicus Ecclesiarum Orientalium*, prepared by Michael Lacko SJ (Rome 1972) and contemporary maps and statistics compiled by Ronald G Roberson CSP, from *Annuario Pontificio*, Vatican City 2014.

This invaluable new work will appeal to both academic and ecclesiastical groups, and represents a major resource for anyone interested in exploring the full breadth of topics surrounding the Eastern Christian world. Overall, this *Encyclopedia* is a must have for any Christian reference shelf.

NEWS

PARENTS OF ST. LITTLE THERESE CANONIZED

Pope Francis canonized the parents of St. Theresa, Louis Martin (1823-1894) and Marie Guerin Martin (1831-1877) on 18 December 2015 on the occasion of the World Mission Sunday, during the last synod of bishops on marriage and family. Pope declared them as a model of holiness for the life of married couples all over the world. Pope named them 'evangelizing couple' who throughout their life bore witness to the beauty of faith in Jesus Christ both inside and outside the family. They had nine children. Only five daughters survived infancy and they all became nuns; Sr. Marie of the Sacred Heart, Carmelite; Mother Agnes of Jesus, Carmelite; Sr. Francoise Therese, Visitandine; Sr. Genevieve of the Holy Face, Carmelite; Therese of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face, Carmelite, canonized in 1925.

NEW DICASTERY FOR LAITY, FAMILY AND LIFE

On October 22, during the synod of bishops on marriage and family, Pope announced the decision to establish a new dicastery for laity, family and life which replaced the former pontifical councils for the laity and family and the pontifical academy for life. Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, the Archbishop emeritus of Milan was entrusted to study the feasibility of the new dicastery.

MOTHER THERESA WILL BE DECLARED SAINT IN THE YEAR OF MERCY

Mother Theresa, who is known as the Angel of Mercy will be canonized during the year of mercy. Pope officially approved the miracle, attributed to her intercession, which was the healing of a sick Brazilian man suffering from a viral brain infection that had left him in coma. Mother worked in the peripheries of Calcutta serving the poor, sick, and the marginalized. She was full of mercy. She was awarded the Nobel peace prize in 1979. Pope did not declare the date for canonization ceremony but announced that it would be during this extra ordinary jubilee year of mercy.

NEW EXARCHATE FOR SYRO MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH

On January 04, 2016 Holy Father Pope Francis raised the Apostolic Exarchate of the Syro Malankara Catholics in the United States to the status of an Eparchy with the name St. Mary, Queen of Peace, of the United States of America and Canada. The present Exarch Thomas Eusebios Naickaparambil is promoted as its first bishop. He will also

continue to be the Apostolic Visitor to Europe for the Syro Malankara Catholics. There are 16 clergy serving in the new Eparchy and 16 parishes and several missions located in the different states of the U.S and Canada.

**AUXILIARY BISHOP FOR THE SYRO MALABAR DIOCESE OF
KANJIRAPILLY**

Rev. Dr. Jose Pulickal is elected auxiliary bishop of the Syro Malabar Eparchy of Kanjirappally during the synod of bishops of Syro Malabar Church, on 7-12 January held at Mount St. Thomas Kakkanadu. He has been serving as Syncellus of the Eparchy. the bishop elect belongs to Inchiyani parish of the same eparchy. He did his Philosophy and Theology studies in St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor. He was ordained priest on 1 January 1991. The Episcopal ordination will be on 4 February 2016.

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